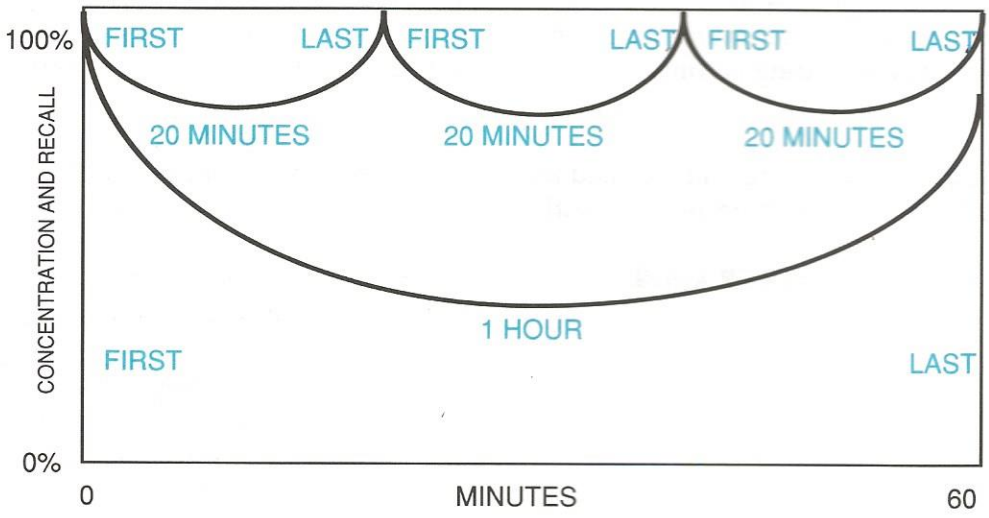
12. Develop and Learn to Use Your Memory

Your memory is nature's greatest tool for saving time and energy. Virtually everything we do – from tying our shoes, to driving a car, to using words when we talk or write – is based upon memory and the ability of our minds to recall.

However, memory strategies are used by very few students as effectively as they could be. There are several good books available on how to improve your memory. Here are just a few tricks I have picked up over the years which have helped me and my students.

a. Commit things to memory only when you are well rested. Trying to memorize difficult material when you are tired is a waste of time.

My students and I found that several short sessions were better than one long session. This was later confirmed in Tony Buzan's book, *Make the Most of Your Mind*. In it he explains the first and last item in a series are the easiest to recall because that's when concentration is at its peak.



b. Studies indicate that certain vitamins can improve our memory, not just a little, but quite a bit – enough to make a big difference in your grades. Eat well, and supplement your diet with these memory vitamins:

- Vitamin C protects nerve tissue; a deficiency can contribute to mental confusion.
- Vitamin B-1 (thiamine) produces energy for nerve cells in the brain.
- Vitamin B-3 (niacin) aids in concentration.
- Vitamin B-6 builds protein from amino acids; a deficiency can lead to lack of concentration.
- Vitamin B-12 (folic acid and iron) prevents anemia which can lead to difficulty in concentration.
- Lecithin and Choline are essential for memory.
- Tyrosine, an amino acid, helps long-term memory.